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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000053

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SUBJECT: HAITI: MAJORITY COALITION OUSTS CHAMBER OF
DEPUTIES PRESIDENT

REF: A. 08 PORT AU PRINCE 934
[1](#)B. 08 PORT AU PRINCE 115
[1](#)C. 08 PORT AU PRINCE 453
[1](#)D. 08 PORT AU PRINCE 1749
[1](#)E. 08 PORT AU PRINCE 126

Classified By: Amb. Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: The informal grouping called the "Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians" (CPP) swept all five positions in the annual Chamber of Deputies leadership elections January 14, dealing a decisive defeat to former Chamber President Eric Jean-Jacques and his allies. Levaillant Louis-Jeune, the CPP's candidate for Chamber President, beat Jean-Jacques by a two-to-one margin after campaigning against the latter's aggressive use of patronage to curry favor among his ad hoc group of followers. The new Chamber President declared his intention to clean up the management of Chamber operations. In the Senate, Kely Bastien kept his post as President after Fanmi Lavalas's Rudy Herivaux failed to draw sufficient support to unseat him. Both developments are favorable to President Rene Preval and Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis, although Pierre-Louis's Finance Minister is scheduled to appear in the Senate January 21 to defend the government's spending on disaster relief and infrastructure projects. End summary.

"REFORMIST" COALITION GAINS GROUND IN THE LOWER CHAMBER

[1](#)2. (C) Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP) candidate Levaillant Louis-Jeune (Fusion, Artibonite) won the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies January 14, ousting incumbent Eric Jean-Jacques (Lespwa, West) by a vote of 60 deputies to 30. (Note: The CPP came together in the Chamber in early 2008 -- it does not extend to the Senate -- as an informal group to oppose the leadership of former Chamber President Jean-Jacques, and then further coalesced as a group to leverage concessions from President Rene Preval in return for support for his candidates for Prime Minister after the Alexis government fell in April 2008 -- ref A. End note) Louis-Jeune won the election by criticizing what he called the "corrupt" practices of his predecessor, whom he accused of using authorizations for rental cars and official travel, as well as control over the hiring process for parliamentary staff, to maintain his support in the Chamber during his three-year tenure as President. Jean-Jacques had postponed the vote by one day to attempt to cobble together support for

a fourth term as Chamber President, but could not overcome the CPP's majority of at least 52 of 99 Deputies. According to one Deputy, CPP members did not fold their ballots before submitting them, a move to demonstrate to CPP leadership they were not secretly voting for Jean-Jacques after promising to vote for Louis-Jeune.

13. (C) In conversations with Poloff, Deputies invariably described internal Chamber politics, rather than national issues such as disaster relief or economic policy, as the driving force behind this election. A similar effort to unseat Jean-Jacques failed in January 2008 (ref B), but frustration at his handling of Chamber business only grew after Questeur Cholzer Chancy (L'Artibonite en Action, Artibonite) published a report in February 2008 (ref C) detailing abuses and waste under the leadership of Jean-Jacques and the former Questeur, Maxeau Balthazar (Fusion, Southeast). (Note: The Questeur is responsible for a number of financial and administrative matters in the Chamber. End note) Deputy Louis-Jeune told Poloff December 31 that regularizing the Chamber's hiring process, ending Jean-Jacques's patronage system, and bringing transparency to the Chamber's operating budget would be his highest priorities as Chamber President. He also made that a clear theme of his first declaration to the press as Chamber President, saying that many of the Chamber's staff is "underqualified or not qualified at all." In addition, he exhorted Deputies to comply with Haiti's asset disclosure law.

14. (U) The re-election of the Questeur, CPP member Cholzer Chancy, will aid Louis-Jeune's campaign to reform the

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administration of the Chamber of Deputies. Chancy was first elected in January 2008 in part based on his promise to investigate mismanagement under his predecessor. Like the other CPP candidates for Chamber leadership positions, Chancy was re-elected unanimously after the Coalition's crushing victory in the election for President discouraged non-CPP candidates from even contesting the other races. Jean-Camille Desmarattes (RDNP, Southeast) is the new Vice President, Francenet Denius (Union, Nippes) the new First Secretary, and Miolin Charles Pierre (Lespwa, Northeast) the new Second Secretary.

LOWER CHAMBER ELECTIONS WORK IN PREVAL'S FAVOR

15. (C) For the moment, Louis-Jeune appears favorably disposed to President Preval and Prime Minister Pierre-Louis's government. In a December 31 meeting with Poloff, he offered only mild criticism of Pierre-Louis's handling of the hurricane recovery efforts. Many other prominent CPP members have also refrained from criticizing Pierre-Louis; CPP Vice President Patrick Joseph told Poloff in early December that the government was doing an acceptable job of managing the crisis given the extent of the hurricane damage Haiti was facing. Lavalas Deputy Sorel Francois -- not a member of the CPP -- alleged to Poloff on January 15 that President Preval and former Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis had prepared the way for Louis-Jeune's election by showering CPP Deputies with agriculture and education projects in their districts.

16. (C) Although former Chamber President Jean-Jacques was elected under the banner of President Rene Preval's Lespwa coalition, his defeat in the Chamber's leadership elections is not a blow to Preval or his Prime Minister's government. Jean-Jacques had grown increasingly critical of Preval on his handling of recovery efforts and the high cost of living, and also joined Fanmi Lavalas (FL) demonstrations on December 16 (ref D) to commemorate the anniversary of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's first election. FL moderate and former Chamber of Deputies President Yves Cristalin told Poloff later in December that Jean-Jacques had called him to express interest in aligning himself with Lavalas, but Cristalin and his allies doubt Jean-Jacques's Lavalas

credentials.

BASTIEN MAINTAINS HIS POST AS SENATE PRESIDENT

¶7. (C) Meanwhile, Kely Bastien (Lespwa, North) was proclaimed President of the Senate January 13 for a second one-year term after consensus failed to emerge on an alternative candidate.

Senators Edmonde Supplice Beauzile (Fusion, Center), Rudy Herivaux (Lavalas, West) and former Senate President Joseph Lambert (Lespwa, Southeast) had presented themselves as candidates at various stages of the backroom politicking that led to the agreement, but each eventually withdrew their respective candidacies. Bastien's chief of staff told Poloff January 14 that the decision was made "by consensus" and that no formal vote took place. Other officers of the Senate's bureau also maintained their old positions: Andris Riche (OPL, Grand'Anse) as Vice President, Fritz Carlos Lebon (Union, South) as Questeur, Eddy Bastien (Alyans, Northwest) as First Secretary, and Judnel Jean (Fusion, Northeast) as Second Secretary.

¶8. (U) Senator Herivaux, an increasingly frequent and vociferous critic of Preval, had expected to succeed Bastien as Senate President in accordance with an understanding reached during the January 2008 bureau elections (ref E). Press reports indicated that President Preval hosted meetings in the National Palace over the weekend of January 10-11 to find an agreement on Bastien's successor, but to no avail. Herivaux emerged from the January 13 Senate session furious with Bastien and Beauzile for opposing his candidacy; he also denounced President Preval as an "ingrate" and "enemy number one" of Fanmi Lavalas for his opposition to Herivaux's candidacy for Senate President and his failure to reciprocate Lavalas support for Preval's election as President in 2006. Herivaux lamented that he could only rely on Youri Latortue

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(Artibonite en Action, Artibonite), Evalliere Beauplan (Pont, Northwest), and Judnel Jean (Fusion, Northeast) as allies in the Senate.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

¶9. (C) Levaillant LOUIS-JEUNE, a member of the Fusion of Haitian Social Democrats political party, represents the Desdunes area of the Artibonite department. He is currently estranged from Fusion leadership; he told Poloff in December that Fusion needs new leadership and that the party should take greater account of the views of its deputies (such as himself). A former judge and teacher, he studied law at the State University of Port-au-Prince. Louis-Jeune has a number of close relatives in the United States, including his father and children. He was born on July 23, 1963 in Desdunes. His English language abilities are unknown.

¶10. (C) Kely BASTIEN, President of the Senate since January 2008, received a degree in medicine from the State University of Haiti (1992), a diploma in health systems management from the University of Rabat, Morocco (1998), and a masters from the University of Montreal in health management. He was the President of the Chamber of Deputies (1997-98) during his earlier tenure as a Deputy (1995-99), and has also worked as a doctor and a professor of medicine. Bastien was born on August 13, 1965 in Acul du Nord; he is married and has three children. He speaks limited English but prefers French in official meetings.

COMMENT: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

¶11. (C) Although Louis-Jeune was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies on a "reform" agenda, we see little prospect of dramatic change in the lower chamber. While he railed against unjustified travel and other perks under the

Presidency of Jean-Jacques, he also spent the New Year holiday with relatives in New York at the expense of Parliament, ostensibly on a trip for consultations at Haiti's mission to the United Nations. According to one Deputy, he announced shortly after his election that elections for Chamber committees would be postponed by a month, a possible sign that quick progress on priority legislation is unlikely.

¶12. (C) Bastien's successful maneuvering to maintain his post as Senate President, like the developments in the Chamber of Deputies, amount to a victory for Préval. By blocking Sen. Herivaux's candidacy, Préval succeeded -- for the time being -- in sidelining an outspoken opponent. However, despite Bastien's well-deserved reputation for diffusing tensions between the Parliament and the executive branch, he may have a difficult time keeping his more fractious colleagues under control. The interpellation of Finance Minister Daniel Dorsainvil in the Senate, for example, is scheduled for January 21.
SANDERSON